



Memorandum

To: David Horton, Chair, Busa Land Use Committee

From: Chris Kluchman, ACIP; Ken Kreutziger, FAICP Lexington Housing Partnership Board

Date: December 6, 2010

This memo contains a general summary of the rationale behind the Lexington Housing Partnership Board (LHP) concept plan presented on November 4, 2010. It also addresses questions raised by the Busa Land Use Committee on November 18, 2010. We have rearranged the committee questions to group similar topics together. Finally, we include more rationale for each of the areas within the concept plan.

We put this together quickly to meet the deadlines for the committee. We hope it is clear and helps the committee with their planning process.

Review of General Strategy for Concept

- ❖ Mixed Use project on the Busa parcel accommodating the three uses being discussed.
 1. Affordable Housing – use land generally outside of tilled areas having utilities.
 2. Recreation – provide a multi purpose field for soccer and lacrosse using the northwest corner of the property.
 3. Farm – use previously tilled land preserving the well site and the adjacent greenhouse primarily on the southern part of the property.
- ❖ Provide that each use can develop separately on its own schedule.
- ❖ Parking areas can be shared for the public uses of recreation and farm to the extent feasible. Separate parking and access for the private housing use.

Committee questions (grouped by topic)

Roads and Access

1. Who helps us understand if the proposed road is viable?
6. Internal roadways can handle capacity?

Response:

Our intent in showing the parking areas for farm and recreation use was to demonstrate that parking and circulation can be accommodated on the site. We assume that any



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development proposal of the site will undergo a rigorous review by the Planning Board as some sort of Special Permit. The capacity depends on which uses are coming forward. The housing proposal on its own supports parking and internal circulation of vehicles.

❖ **Access to Uses on Site**

1. Housing: Opposite Litchfield Road in current farm stand area.
2. Recreation and Community Farm: Access for public uses is proposed south of the residential out-parcel within the Busa parcel along the frontage of Lowell Street. Current access is now possible at the extreme southern boundary and the Community Farm shows access for farm operations at this location. Approved public access could be constructed along this frontage. The Recreation Concept proposal shows housing in this parcel along Lowell Street and in this scenario access to housing would be along this Lowell Street frontage.

Housing Units

2. What smaller number of units would still be viable?

Response:

There is no straightforward answer to this question, so we offer an explanation of some of the factors that go into deciding whether a project might be viable. The part most related to the number of units is the availability (or not) of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).

Since the LIHTC are packaged / syndicated and sold to limited partner investors, the transaction costs are quite onerous when the deals are too small. Even in a large project the cost for attorneys and brokers is substantial. Therefore, when the state funding agency Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) allocates the Credits, in the interest of bang for the buck, they will not prioritize small projects. We don't think there is not a set threshold. The DHCD has lists of 2010 recipients, for which the smallest project is 19 units. Readiness to proceed and financial viability at the time of application are probably more overriding concerns.

We proposed 14 units to take advantage of the economies of scale in terms of financing availability and construction costs. Fewer units means increased costs as the project may not qualify for federal low income housing tax credits. Thus, more funding would be needed from the Town or other sources.



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3. Do we consider nearby affordable housing in Arlington?

Response:

The lack of affordable housing is a regional issue for the entire Boston area, but we are addressing the best use of this land for the benefit of current and future Lexington residents. We know there is a documented need for affordable housing in Lexington, and we are particularly concerned with entry level housing for those “in the middle” – making around the average median income for our area ((approximately \$90,000 for a household of four). The housing partnership works actively with surrounding communities to find the best solutions that can work across town boundaries, in terms of sharing staff resources and other knowledge and skills of housing advocacy.

We caution the committee that it should not make assumptions that nearby units as “affordable.” It can be difficult to know specifically how many and which units actually meet the criteria for affordable housing. If there are questions about the amount of affordable units in Lexington, we can provide you with a list of such units.

Parking

4. Parking counts: what is the actual total in the proposal? (for all uses of the land)
7. Parking can accommodate the game change demand?

Response:

Our intent in showing the parking areas for farm and recreation use was to demonstrate that parking and circulation could be accommodated on the site. However, we assume that any development proposal of the site will undergo a rigorous review by the Planning Board as some sort of Special Permit. The exact number of parking spaces and special considerations for “game time” parking should be addressed when a specific recreation proposal comes forward. Only then can the exact number of parking spaces be designed.

- Housing: 28 parking spaces, 2 spaces per unit.
- Recreation: 42 spaces in lot adjacent to field, plus 4 spaces in lot near well, plus 20 spaces shared with Community Farm. Total is 66 spaces.
- Community Farm: 20 spaces shared with Recreation plus additional dedicated spaces required by Community Farm to be laid out by proponent.

Environmental concerns

5. Any contamination that would prevent building on the property, need to be removed, what cost?



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Response:

We reviewed the documents related to contamination. Especially pertinent is the September 1 2009 Memorandum from Woodard & Curran. The findings from that memorandum seem to conclude that the levels of contamination in the agricultural fields and greenhouse area (SS-2 and SS-6) “do not pose a risk to human health.” However, in order to eliminate these chemicals, we got the following advice from a non-profit housing project manager. *“The most cost effective way to eliminate the health risks associated with chlorodane when using property for residences is to cover the chlorodane with either 3 feet of clean fill or 1 foot of clean fill and a layer of pavement. The chlorodane was identified under the greenhouse, most of which would become a parking lot in our proposed scheme. Although the Lexington Housing Partnership has not solicited pricing, the chlorodane contamination at the Busa Farm seems to be confined to a defined area, and therefore the additional costs of remediation are not enough to make housing at Busa financially infeasible.”*

Redevelopment of developed area

8. Sustainable approach is misleading – housing may be located on previously developed land but this forces a new entrance drive, roadway & parking areas onto undisturbed land.

Response:

There is no “undisturbed land” on this site. The entire site has been actively farmed for years. We placed the most intense development (multi-family housing) on the area of the site that is covered by impervious surfaces currently - by parking lot, small tilled area, and buildings.

Placement of access roads to other uses on the site seeks to minimize disturbance of the tilled fields.

School considerations

9. How many children might be expected from the number of units proposed?

Response

We encourage you to look carefully at the size of units (1, 2 or 3 bedroom) when considering the number of children. We proposed 2 3 bedrooms, 8 1 bed rooms and 4 2 bedrooms. The smaller the dwelling unit, the fewer children would be expected. Our estimate is that 12 to 14 units would produce 4 to 5 children if there is a mixture of unit types. If only three bedroom units are built, there will be fewer than 12 units.



Statement of Rationale and thinking behind the site plan:

❖ Housing

1. Buildings clustered to form enclave of residential use.
2. Orient housing toward Lowell Street where utilities exist.
3. Use previously developed areas where paving, farm stand and greenhouses were located.
4. Surround residential by modest landscaped open space for better environment.
5. Larger buildings in scale with surrounding housing to create more optimal efficiencies for heating, cooling and green construction that includes:
 - Less exterior wall surface constructed per unit.
 - Height is at least two stories.
 - Employ "Green" development and LEED certified materials and methods.
6. Separate access from the other public gathering uses.
7. Concept shows 14 units in two buildings of seven units each with a total of 28 parking spaces for a ratio of two parking spaces per unit.
8. Residential density is related to the gross site area of 7.93 acres yielding 1.76 units per acre or 24,750 square feet per unit or slightly greater than half an acre per unit.
9. Scale of housing cluster: Non-profit affordable housing developers have a basic threshold of around 20 units to obtain the most desirable economies of scale. We are confident that we can come close to these economies with the proposed two buildings and 14 units shown on our concept plan.

❖ Recreation

1. Size and orientation of recreation field, what should it be?
 - The National Collegiate Athletic Association maximum field size for soccer is 225'x360' while the minimum is 165'x300' that does not include safety zones. For Lacrosse the length is set at 330' that includes a 45' area behind the goal location on each end and the width from 180' to 210'. But we did not allow for consideration of college sports.
 - When doing a master plan for the Town of Bedford the following guidelines were provided for multiuse field space. These include safety zones, but no buffers. For high school the size was 195'x300'; for intermediate (6-8th) 135'x210'; and for elementary (under 10) 120'x195'



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with some fields lined for early instruction areas across the width of the field making two fields.

- The orientation of a field space in a north-south direction is important particularly for play in the evening when the sun is low to minimize sun in the athlete's eyes.
- Our concept plan shows a field space allocation of 190'x315' oriented in a north-south direction that includes the field, safety zones and any buffer required. A few more feet in width could be provided, but additional length cannot be achieved due to property line limitations on the north and south. The north-south field orientation allows both the field and housing to be on the northern part of the site (40%), and the Community Farm to occupy the southern part of the site (60%) including some land for vehicle circulation and access from the south. This layout also provides for retention of the greenhouse and well site for use by the Community Farm.

2. In this concept there are no other recreation facilities except for a trail system.

❖ **Community Farm**

2. Preserves large areas of contiguous agricultural land and views of the working landscape and adjacent natural areas to the south.
3. Use of existing well and greenhouse is accommodated.
4. Farm Based Outreach and Education Center located on the Busa site including educational community gardens as well as basic fields of food production.
5. Augment land resource as required for operation of scale in same manner as that done by Busa using the resources along Waltham Street. See the report prepared by Bob Pressman presented to the Committee on November 18, 2010.
6. An added element on Waltham Street could be community gardens operated by the Community Farm on lease from the Town Conservation Commission as part of Waltham Street Field 2.



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❖ **Summary of Proposed Land Uses Allocation**

Proposed Land Uses by Size - Corrected

Proposed Use	Percent total property	Acres
Housing and parking	15-%	~ 1.2 acres
Community Farm and shared parking	61 %	~ 4.8 acres.
Multi use field and associated parking	24 %	~ 1.9 acres.
Total	100%	~ 7.9 Acres